9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6



encampment around which thousands of horses grazed. Yet informants said quarrels between owners due to inability to distinguish their respective horses were very rare.

The Blackfoot knew their horses by color, conformation, physical and action peculiarities. The wealthy Many Horses was said to have known every animal in his herd so well that he could describe a missing animal in detail to the young man he sent to search for it. Stingy, the wealthy blind man, was credited with the ability to identify many of his horses by the sound of their hoofbeats, and to know all of them by feel. Brings-Down-the-Sun, chief of the North Piegan, claimed his father could tell a horse's age by its whinny (McClintock, 1910, p. 422). These feats of recognition were exceptional. However, as a people who spent their lives in the company of horses, the Blackfoot were keenly aware of the individual peculiarities of these valuable possessions.

Owners of large herds named only those animals that were broken and in daily use in addition to a few good mares and stallions in their range herds maintained for breeding purposes. The name of each animal usually was selected to describe the horse's appearance, more rarely its peculiarities of action. As several informants recalled, "we named them by the looks of them."

Color names were most common. Common color names for horses recalled by the old people were:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| White | Black | Buckskin | Sorrel |
| Gray | Black Pinto | Bay | Red Pinto |
| Mouse-colored | Blue | Dark Bay | Brown |
| Iron gray | Blue Roan | Roan | |

Some Indians named their dun horses "Dusty." One old lady called her dark, reddish-brown horse "Burnt Bay." Localized color markings also suggested such names as "Bald Face," "Black Legs" and "Two-White-Legs." Peculiarities of size and shape gave rise to "No Mane," "Big Pinto," "Little-Gray-Horse," "Crow Foot," "Flop Ears," and "Split Ears." Other factors less commonly suggested names, such as "Gray-Horse-Crazy," "Sits Down," and "Orphan." It is not difficult to see that by employing a combination of descriptive terms, as was actually done (for example, "Black-Bald-Face" and "Bay-With-Star-on-Forehead"), it was possible to coin a great variety of names for horses. Men who owned race horses commonly called them either "Racer" or "Gambler."

When many Piegan were employed on the Blackfeet Reservation irrigation project in the early years of this century, they began to give their horses "white man names." Today the old color names are rarely heard on the Montana reservation. Even older fullbloods, who

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6



speak little English, apply English names to their horses. However, Percy Creighton said that on the Blood Reserve the old, picturesque, color names were still in vogue (1947), except for horses purchased from Whites that had been previously named.[9]

## DAILY CARE OF HORSES

Among the Blackfoot daily care of family horse herds was generally entrusted to boys 8 to 12 or more years of age, except during the most inclement winter months when men of the household assumed responsibility for the task. If there were several boys in a family the father usually delegated care of the horses to the most dependable and ambitious lad. Sometimes a younger brother cared for the horses of a young married man. Otherwise the latter looked after his own horses. Owners of large herds, or owners of small herds who were sonless, commonly adopted orphan boys to care for their horses. If a young, single man went on a raiding party to steal horses from the enemy, he chose a poor but reliable and ambitious boy to look after his horses while he was away from camp, rewarding the lad with a colt for his labors. If the young warrior had elderly parents who could not obtain food for themselves, he selected a youth in his late teens to care for his horses, rustle food for his parents in the hunt, and keep them well supplied with firewood. Some poor boys got their starts as horse owners through this service.

Duties of the young herder required that he be up before daybreak each morning to go after the horses where they had been pastured the previous night and drive them to a nearby lake or stream for water. Then he drove them to good pasturage near camp and returned to his lodge for breakfast. The owner generally returned to the herd with him after the morning meal, selected the horse or horses he wished to use during the day, perhaps petted his horses a while, and gave instructions to the boy regarding pasturage for the day. At noon the lad drove the horses to water again. Toward evening he watered the horses a third time and drove them to their night pasturage, where

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[9] The published lists of names for horses employed by the Flathead (Turney-High, 1937, p. 110); Kutenai (Turney-High, 1941, p. 71); Cree (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 197), and Hidatsa (Wilson, 1924, pp. 194–195) show a similar preference for color names among those tribes. Eagle Bird, Ogiala, and Smoky, Kiowa, told me those tribes generally named horses after their appearances. Denhart (1947, p. 232) has pointed out that it was a favorite Spanish custom to name a horse according to the impression received on first seeing the animal. Whether the Plains Indian system of descriptive horse naming was adopted from the Spanish cannot be determied from the facts available. Certainly the coincidence is most intriguing.

No Plains Indian tribe is known to have practiced branding in buffalo days. The chronicler of the Long expedition noted that the Pawnee (met in 1819) had no method of affixing distinctive marks to their horses. The many branded horses seen among the Pawnee were either stolen or traded from the Spanish (James, 1823, vol. 1, p. 439).

21: Hungry Wolf F-4,5 (ca. 1972) 1977 NF6 Blackfoot NF6 Blood

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346

Omachkai-gohkstotskain, or "Big Corner Post," in the Medicine Lodge of 1928. Big Corner Post was a dummy made up by a band of the same name. For four years it traveled all over the reserve on missions of humor. At Medicine Lodges it often served as the enemy in battle reenactments. The dummy met its end in a fire at the hands of an irate horse-owner. Someone had stolen the man's finest pinto and tied the dummy on top of it. On the following ration day, a crier went around and announced that Big Corner Post had been arrested for horse stealing and punished by being burnt up. In this photo, with the dummy, from left to right, are: Dog Child; old Bill Heavy Runner; and Rough Hair. (Glenbow Archives)

[552] [196] [203]

[P-309-A]

24: Schultz F-3 (1877-1947) 1980 NF6 Blackfoot NF6



721 [821] I got up and stole toward the camp. Nearing its upper end, I moved more and more slowly—a step or two at a time. A horse was standing before the doorway of the uppermost one of the lodges. It was not frightened, did not move as I approached it. One of the sleepers in the lodge was snoring. Untying the short picket rope of the horse, I led him off very slowly, so slowly that his hoofs made no sound upon the thickly grassed ground. Going to the edge of the timber, I tied him there and went back for another one. But that time I got two. Then I hesitated. Should I or should I not go back to the camp once more? The horses that I had were good ones; perhaps I should be satisfied with my taking and go. But it would be as easy to make [787] off with four as it would with three; and I had strong feeling that the [776] Above Ones and my secret helper would keep me safe. Back I went ● [552] and led out another horse, a big, fat, well-built stallion that I at once named *Sikopi* ("Black-and-White-Spotted") because of his color. I rope-bridled him, got onto him, and leading the three others, rode slowly up onto the plain. There turning the three loose, I drove them fast, heading for home.

The Crows, no doubt, rode far and wide in search of the stealer of their four horses, but they failed to find me. I had but one bad time on my long, back trail and that was my own fault. I had stopped for the day at Yellow River, and with the horses well hidden in a dense, high, growth of willows, I had a good rest and sleep; toward evening, over a small fire, I broiled and ate plenty of the meat of a deer that I had killed that morning just before entering the timber. But I was too eager to go on, to get home with my fine taking of Crow horses. Though I better knew than to do it, though I well knew that I should remain right where I was until real night came, I started on just as Sun was going down to his western home. And no more had I gotten out upon the plain than two white men who were driving a band of white horns toward the river, saw me, came riding and yelling after me. I rode fast, too, as fast as I could drive my three loose horses. Then soon they began shooting at me with their short-guns (six-shooters), and I saw that they could overtake me. Well, I had to stop them or be killed, so I stopped, got down from my horse and began shooting with my rifle—not right at them, but close to